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ABSTRACT

If current trends continue, it is likely that adult programs and adult vocational programs in particular, will play an increasingly important role in the nation's educational system, eventually absorbing the role currently played by secondary vocational education. Therefore, vocational educators must develop new approaches and new attitudes to prepare to serve an older student audience. The work of Malcolm Knowles in the area of andragogy contains many valuable insights as to the differences between adult and younger learners. In view of these differences, a seven-step model for providing vocational education to adults was developed. The parameters of the model are as follows: establish a climate conducive to adult learning, create an organizational structure that allows participative planning, diagnose learning needs, formulate appropriate learning objectives, design and implement appropriate learning activities, and evaluate for rediagnosis of learning needs. (This essay presents guidelines for implementing each of these components of the model.) (MN)

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A STRATEGY TO ADDRESS THE NEEDS OF ADULT LEARNERS BY INCORPORATING ANDRAGOGY INTO VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

by

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INTRODUCTION

Secondary level vocational education has received support from both the educational community and the public in the attempt to prepare adolescents for their place in the world of work. Evans (1981:237-238) documents the support for secondary level vocational education by referring to the Gallup organization's finding that

> When asked about the high school subjects they had taken and which they 'found to be most useful in later life,' commercial subjects and shop are listed in the top five (along with English, mathematics and extra-curricular activities).

It is expected, however, that the role of secondary level vocational education will soon be eroded. Averill (1983:34-35) cited the back-to-the-basics movement and the impact of "A Nation at Risk" as prime contributors to that erosion and explained how there has been movement "away from vocational education programs, career awareness, and pre-service vocational preparation in the comprehensive high school." And, either as a result or because of increased academic standards, "large numbers of young people continue to leave the public school system woefully unprepared for the world of work" (Clinton, 1983:52).

The result of a reduced secondary level vocational education impact is that student age and place of instruction will be changed. Adult programs, area vocational schools, and regional occupational programs will absorb the role

abandoned by the high schools (Averill, 1983:35). However, if vocational education is to continue, it must prepare for older students. Preparing for older students will require more than changing the age section of demographic reports. New approaches and new attitudes will be necessary if adults are to succeed in an area that previously only included children.

PROCEDURES

Consideration of Andragogy

Before detailing the specifics of course structure, it is first necessary to differentiate between children and adults from an educational perspective. Knowles (1978:53-54) contrasts children and adult learners by referring to and explaining the semantic difference between the terms pedagogy and andragogy. Both terms are of Greek origin and the common root for both terms, "agogus", means leader of. The stem "paid" means child and the stem "aner" means man. The result of the terminology is that two conceptualizations toward education emerge. Pedagogy is used in reference to education for children and andragogy refers to education for adults.

A significant difference between pedagogy and andragogy involves the inappropriateness of teaching adults from a pedagogical perspective. Adults, in contrast to children, are self-directed, experienced, ready to learn, and oriented to learn (Knowles, 1978:55-58). Kidd (1973:120-121) provided further support to the notion that adults require a different

educational orientation by relating the role of experience as "the richest source of his learning objectives as well as a resource for testing out hypotheses growing out of the subject matter."

Adult learners are not only experienced; they are also goal-directed. Whether for vocational goals or other purposes, adults pursue education "with an orientation toward an application of the increased competence" (Knox, 1977:449). Even though adults are likely to be more willing to learn than children, andragogy has not received full support from those who are more experienced with pedagogy. Educators are alerted to the status of andragogy in places designed for pedagogy by Knowles' (1977:259) statement

> Because the institutional forms for the education of adults that have survived are for the most part attached to institutions established for other purposes, these programs tend to be perceived as secondary or peripheral functions in their respective social systems.

In view of the unique considerations associated with andragogy and the fact that vocational education for adults will either be directed by or in collaboration with pedagogy, Knowles' (1980:59) paradigm of andragogical processes is suggested as the most appropriate model for the vocational education of adults. The specific parameters of the model are:

1. Establish a climate conducive to adult learning
2. Create an organizational structure that allows participative planning
3. Diagnose learning needs
4. Formulate learning objectives

5. Design learning activities
6. Implement learning activities
7. Evaluate for rediagnosis of learning needs

Establish a Climate Conducive to Adult Learning

Organizations have both a work purpose and a human purpose. Knowles (1980:66) highlighted the interaction of the two by stating

> the quality of learning that takes place in an organization is affected by the kind of organization it is. That is to say that an organization is not simply an instrumentality for providing organized learning activities to adults; it also provides an environment that either facilitates or inhibits learning.

It is suggested that organizational policy, policy in writing to fully document intentions, should be designed to encourage the adult learner. Expected behaviors should be known to the adult and all appropriate enabling behaviors should be reinforced. The development of an acceptable learning atmosphere should not be considered as a lofty goal.

Create an Organizational Structure that Allows Participative Planning

Effective andragogy requires an organization that, either through committees or similar means, allows participation and mutual cooperation between faculty, administration and students. It must be recalled, however, that adult educators are usually trained in and employed by pedagogy. Even if official policy does not accommodate adult learners,

individual educators have the opportunity to use andragogy as more adults enter their classroom and laboratory.

Diagnose Learning Needs

Needs, both from a personal and vocational perspective, are determined by questioning adult students and industrial personnel and by observing workers as they perform their tasks. Adult needs, however, are not the same as child needs. Educators in andragogy must make the appropriate efforts to diagnose the true learning needs of adults--needs that may go beyond specific job training alone.

Formulate Learning Objectives

After needs are established, terminal behavior is analyzed to assess its component parts--the many enabling behaviors. The enabling behaviors are used to formulate the learning objectives. In the form of a hierarchy, learning objectives are used to develop instructional strategies to achieve desired terminal behavior.

Design Learning Activities

Learning activities must involve the adult student and draw upon their interest, maturity, and experience. That does not imply that adult educators abdicate their responsibility. On the contrary, "the teacher, of course, retains responsibility for facilitating the planning by suggesting procedures and coordinating the process" (Knowles, 1980:226).

Implement Learning Activities

Like other aspects of andragogy, the implementation of learning activities is most effective when students are actively involved in the process. Knowles (1980:243) made the suggestion that a learning contract, a written document indicating commitment to learning, can be used to "identify learning resources and strategies that take into account different learning styles." Regardless of the actual use of learning contracts, andragogy must allow proactive student involvement.

Evaluate for Rediagnosis of Learning Needs

Evaluation in andragogy is done from a criterion perspective and is done to highlight "the gaps between desired behavior and present performance" (Knowles, 1980: 247). In regard to evaluation, standard pedagogy will simply not be accepted. Adults, because their education is not compulsory, will not tolerate educational attacks upon their sense of worth. Educators should, ideally, use constructive evaluation for children; for adults that must be the norm.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Andragogy is far more than merely a synonym for adult education. Andragogy incorporates the idea of treating adult learners differently than pedagogy has treated children. Adult learners, unlike children in compulsory education, have the option to remove themselves from an unsatisfactory

educational experience. The treatment of the adult learner goes far beyond the educational climate. Even though they may lack specific skills, adults are experienced. Andragogy is best when adult experience is incorporated into the learning process. Adults are also goal-directed. Andragogy must recognize that "what adults learn on their own initiative they learn more deeply and permanently than what they learn by being taught" (Knowles, 1975:129).

In view of the impact various societal factors such as the back-to-the-basics movement are having upon students of all ages, the following are specifically recommended:

1. Vocational education must recognize the expected increase in the number of adults who will enter vocational education to receive training that was not previously provided at the secondary level.

2. The many notions associated with andragogy must be employed to meet the needs of returning adult learners. Teaching from a pedagogical perspective is simply not appropriate for adults.

It is additionally suggested that the worthiness and appropriateness of andragogy should be transferred to pedagogy whenever possible. Industry is interested in hiring people who understand the world of work and can succeed in the workplace in addition to hiring people with good job skills (Graves, 1983:122). Andragogy can more effectively prepare workers who understand the world of work and, therefore, succeed in the workplace than standard pedagogy.

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